



CHARACTER'S



Vera

Rizer

Allan

Maar

Koume

Ichijou
Tarou

CHARACTER'S

Me, Her, and the Ballistic Weaponry Antique

- WN Chapter 01-04

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Chapter 1

(TL: And now for something completely different.)

“Open all the gunports in the rear!! Set aim... HIGEEEH!!”

Surrounded by monitors on all sides, the center of a room about ten meters in all directions. Various gauges and processing terminals lined up, and within that, Ichijou Tarou had collapsed on the floor as if he were in prayer.

“What I told you to open was... the gunports... who told you to... open my rear...”

Behind Tarou, with her hands locked together, and only her index finger pointed out, the figure of an expressionless woman sitting with one knee up. Tarou noticed a movement in the light, and still on all fours, raised his head to look at the monitors.

“Hey, wait, wait, we’ve opened fire. What the hell’s going on? Do space armies, you know? Does higeeh work as a direction? What’s it supposed to mean? Some sort of code?”

Reflected on all the monitors, hundreds, thousands of pale blue threads of light. By laser propulsion, the antimatter travelling the expanse of space at immense speed was induced into annihilation, causing a burst of heat and light. It twinkled as it left destruction in its path.

“Fufu... Ha Ha Ha!! Just look, overwhelming, is it not? My fleet’s efforts shall bring an end to this war!! The scepter of victory is in our hands! There’s no doubt about it!!”

He closed his eyes, and spread both arms up high. His intoxicated face was colored by the smile of victory.

“Yes. But captain, your sphincter is also nearing its end.”

“With the power I hold... hey, shut it! That’s all your fault, ain’t it!? And that one wasn’t clever at all!!”

Tarou was about to swing his hand down to deliver a retort, but he hurriedly stopped himself. He was well aware of his own reckless personality, but he was even more aware of what would become of his hand if he tried hitting the body of the metal cyborg. He didn't want to experiment on the specifics of that anytime soon.

"Damn, I'm spittin' in your maintenance oil next I get the chance... what's more, well, what's that. I get the feelin' we've come t' quite a far place. An' look at me. You really think I c'n return to earth?"

With his hand touched to his hip, Tarou stared straight out at the galaxies of stars before him. The woman with her smooth metal body stood behind him, and gave a short, 'who knows'.

"Who knows? How light... but so be it. We're sure to fin' it eventually..."

Said to expand infinitely, the void of space.
In it existed the countless lights of stars.

And within that vast and dark world,
Ichijou Tarou was lost.

"The hell!!?"

An impact rushing across his face. His body bent backwards. Ichijou Tarou found his face pressed against the ground, as he took on the elegant posture of a shrimp. He faintly thought over what had happened to him.

"Now then... fer a hospital, tha's quite an atmosphere its got goin' on."

Tarou recalled how he had been hospitalized for stomach pain the other day, and he fought against the intense pain and washed-out sensation coming over his body as he began to roll against the hard, metallic floor.

"Urgh, it's no good. Humanity ain't ready for that way of movement yet... oh, right, where am I?"

Feeling some nausea, Tarou slowly stood, and turned a circle to take in the vast room that was overflowing with an out-of-place sensation. As far as he could recall, he had at least checked into a very standard hospital, and it didn't

have any rooms full metal from the walls to the ceiling.

“Abducted? Aaah, no. The door’s wide open. Anyone there~?”

Tarou put his hand to his mouth, and called out. The empty room let his room echo quite nicely, but there wasn’t a voice besides his own to respond. He called out twice more in much the same way, but in the end, he gave up, and loitered around the center of the room.

“Hmm, could it be a research lab of sorts? Was my local neighborhood hospital that advanced?”

Wondering why he was talking to himself, Tarou slowly inspected the room’s interior. Surrounded by barren milky-white walls, there was nothing else but a few terminals that gave off a pc-esque vibe. It was truly an unnerving space. The ground was filled with blocks around a meter across in all directions, with some space between each. Perhaps to form a path, a white line had been drawn to avoid those squares. Tarou found some lettering near the line, and casually turned his eyes to it.

“Ye~p, can’t read at a~ll. It’s foreign.”

From the shape, it was something close to the latin alphabet, but Tarou couldn’t make it out at all. After letting out a single, deep sigh, he started off towards the place he wanted to avoid, if possible.

“Yea~h. I presume I fell outta that thing.”

Said Tarou to a lump of metal growing out of the ground. Inside it was a device containing a cavity of human shape. Alongside complex wiring, he saw a number of needle-like protrusions, with faint red traces of red left on them in a shade that would convince anyone it was blood.

“What sort of torture device be this? I don’t have such hobbies... Is that an Endohr Corp Type IV? ... wait, what?”

Tarou mused over the words that had come so smoothly out of his mouth, and stopped in his tracks. A company called Endohr Corp-and the other thing-whatever Type IV meant, while it had come from his own mouth, he had absolutely no recollection of it whatsoever.

“The hell? How scary.”

Holding his shaking body, he took a step back. Its trigger was unidentified, but at that moment, a light vibration shook the room. The floor slowly began to move.

“Oh stop right there. You see, I hate these sorts of developments, you know...”

The block units in the floor rose up one after the next. And those dozens of units, differing not from Tarou’s expectations, were fashioned with the same apparatus as the one before his eyes. Tarou gazed over them, as they leisurely float up. But what he didn’t anticipate wasn’t that he found them empty, but that...

“So it’s the skeletons in the closet. No, can’t laugh this one off...”

It was likely the fact, that within all of them was nothing but human bones.

... “COLD SLEEP SYSTEM, THAWING COMPLETE” ...

A synthetic sound rung out from somewhere in the room. It caused Tarou’s body to jerk.

“Eh, ah, what? So that’s how it is? Was that the kind of guy I was? With that incurable illness thing?”

... “CONVALESCENCE SURVIVAL RATE: 0.0002374” ...

“... Oy, oy, aren’t you failing a bit too much there?”

... “DECEASED: 4211” ...

“Four thousand... hey, wait a second there. That’s—”

... “IN PROCESS: NONE” ...

“Yes, please wait a right there. See, look. I just want to calculate this out here.”

... “SURVIVORS” ...

“Wait.”

... “1” ...

“... Whoohoo, how lucky~... as if I could rejoice!!? Someone!!? Anyone

there!!?”

Distraught by the incomprehensible situation, Tarou found himself most surprised by how calm he was. Even so, his heart was hammering, his legs were shaking, and his body wouldn't move as he willed it. Collapsing with tangled legs, he began to crawl his way to the exit.

“Hey, doc!! Someone!! Anyone!!?”

As if being chased by something, Tarou made his way out, and found himself racing down a hallway of the same construction as the room. Along the way, he found several things that looked like doors, but he didn't know how to open them. They didn't have doorknobs, and he didn't see anything like sensors on them.

“Oy!! Dammit, is there really no one here? Just where am I... wait, huh?”

At the end of the long corridor. Arriving at a conspicuously larger door, Tarou saw a gap in the middle of its sliding frame. After calling out a few times to whomever may be beyond it, he thrust both his hands into that gap.

“One two, nggggggggggh!!”

The door that iron-looking door was heavy, and Tarou put his feet against the wall, and pushed with all his might. Along the way, the thought of turning back, and playing with the terminals had come to mind, but if possible, he didn't want to return there.

“God dammit, move!!”

Still questioning himself over why he was so serious about opening it, he felt some relief as he felt the lump of iron finally start to move.

“Fhah... well then, pardon... me...?”

What Tarou stepped foot in was a room of the same construction. But there was one large point that differed.

“What's... this...”

On the side opposite the door, there was a giant glass window in place of a wall. In a daze, Tarou staggered towards it, observing his own figure reflected back at him, as he drew closer and closer.

“... Space?”

What extended before him was an infinite expanse of stars. That vivid array of lights was something he definitely would never be able to see from earth, and Tarou momentarily forgot his situation as he looked out over it. He had no knowledge of constellations, but he didn't think such a thing was necessary to take in the twinkling lights, or to find them beautiful.

“Halfway through, I was hoping I was getting punk'd...”

... “MESSAGE REPLAY, STANDARD YEAR 1428 11 05”...

A sudden voice from behind. Tarou turning in surprise, but the room was as empty as ever. The unfamiliar term of standard year sent a shiver down his spine, but with the thought that the message was something like an answering machine, he waited for its continuation.

... “Testing, testing. Regular report. 14281105. Nothing out of the ordinary.”

Unlike the synthetic sounds from before, it was a voice that clearly belonged to a man.

“No, this situation is far, far from ordinary.”

He didn't even know where the voice was coming from, but Tarou muttered to himself as he headed for the center of the room.

... “Interstellar travel going exceedingly smoothly. No problems with the ship or cargo.” ...

“No, I'm telling you this ain't smooth. Especially the cargo part... and wait, for reals? This is a spaceship? Uuum, just how many years have I been out? This is the future, dude; the future. Did they develop the car-shaped robot yet?”

... “Henceforth, all crew members will enter a cold sleep. The next report will be in five years' time.” ...

“Yes, yes. Nighty night... OOOOOOOYY!!!!”

... “That is all. Ulster Wayne, tuning out.” ...

“W-wait a second. Eh, what? What did he just say? All the crew? Could it possibly be that he just said all crew members?”

Tarou panicked some as he paced back and forth in the room. Naturally, there was no response.

“All the crew in... cold sleep? No, no, no. I mean, doesn't that mean...”

Tarou continued muttering to himself, but even the words coming out his mouth didn't reach his own ears. He didn't know what he was saying. Because in his head, the first words he had heard from the synthetic voice were echoing in his head.

... “SURVIVORS: 1. SURVIVORS: 1.” ...

Chapter 2

(TL: It's)

“Thank you for tunin’ in. You’re listenin’ to pitiful Tarou-chan who just woke up to absolute hopelessness and despair. Maybe I should just go ‘n die, haha.”

Tarou raised his hands into a victory pose. He knew he should’ve understood there wasn’t a retort coming his way, but perhaps he hoped for it somewhere in his heart. Feelings emptiness from the empty space, he lowered his arms.

“No at the very least, I want to go off after losin’ my virginity... I ain’t a virgin!! ... yeah, I’m getting hungry. Wonder if there’s anythin’ around.”

Click and clack, he walked across the cold metal floor. For now, he tried to motivate himself to explore, but that was a hard task. There were only two rooms he could enter, after all.

“He said the next report’ll be in five years, right? It really depends on how many ‘ears it’s been since then, but at most, I’ll have to wait a full five? With some luck, it may even be tomorrow? No, no, ain’t happenin’. But will they come lookin’ for us if we don’t get in contact? I wonder. No clue. Why was I blasted into space in the first place?”

Tarou mumbled to himself as he entered the room he had first woken up in. Trying hard as he could not to look at the line of corpses, he went towards the display that looked to be a PC monitor. The bodies in the corners of his eyes brought about his nausea, but he ignored it to the best of his ability.

“... Where’s the switch supposed to be?”

What you might find in a somewhat stylish bar, a slender and round table. And on top of it was the display. Tarou busily moved around it as he searched out an electricity switch, but there wasn’t a trace of anything like that.

“... You’re wrong, okay!! It’s not like I think that even if I start it up, it’ll be in words I can’t read, so there’s no point, alright!!”

After Tarou angrily shook his back once, he finally hung his head in loneliness.

“Dammit, aren’t I totally screwed?”

It hadn’t actually been that long since he woke up, but he felt the despair was already going to overtake him. He approached the mechanism his body had likely been stuffed into, and extended a hand towards it.

“Type IV ain’t a complete cold freeze. It’s supposed to inject nutrients in periodically. Oral intake should work fine... unlock... if I set it to manual... ‘kay, the injection point’s... no, that’s wrong. It’s over here, is it? Damn! Why can I do these sorts of things!?”

The knowledge he shouldn’t have known created a sense of discomfort he could equate to no other, and caused his body to shake. But his hands naturally proceeded to their next motions without a moment’s hesitation, and his head was filling with the knowledge pertaining to the device before him. His brisk movements disassembled the device before he knew it, and changed the autonomous control mechanism of the nutrient supplying device to manual control.

“For a handle... that’ll serve fine. Even if it don’t look too nice, who cares? I’m the only one here. Now then, how’s it to the taste?”

When he turned the handle, a red liquid started flowing soundlessly from the tip of the needle. Tarou’s face twisted with disgust, as he used his finger to bring some to his mouth.

“Whooh, the taste’s the worst. The hell’s this. Yeah, that’s right. If I had to compare it to something, it’d be something like sugared up iron... I should really be honest with myself here. This is the taste of blood, ain’t it.”

With fed-up bearing, Tarou muttered to himself, before he pinched his nose, and tried to down some. He turned his head as if to drink water directly from a tap.

“Uwoooooaaah!! Bah, ptooeey, hell, as if I could drink something like that!! I ain’t a vampire!!”

After grandiosely expelling the contents of his mouth, he went towards the device, and began shouting at it.

“Hah...but I’m going to end up drinkin’ it in the end, aren’t I. I’ll try again when I’m so hungry I might die. What else do I need... for now, just oxygen and water, I guess. I don’t know anyone from NASA, I tells ya’... could I collect the condensation off these freezing devices here? But if the moisture disappears from the air, I’m done for... air conditioning...”

He continued a subdued murmur as he turned his head in circles. When he noticed a duct-like mesh on the ceiling, he climbed up onto the cold sleep equipment to put his face to it.

“It... won’t come off. Of course. It’d be dangerous if it fell on someone... so this’s the screw fixing it. Okay, ‘s long as I have a wrench... like hell I have one!! And what is this anyways? I’ve never seen a seven-sided sided screw head hole before!!”

Tarou jumped down from the equipment, took a piece of metal in hand, and tossed it aside. Telling himself to give it up already, he lay down on the spot. The reality that didn’t have a sense of reality had him begin to question why he was even trying.

“I’m sure when tomorrow comes around, help’ll come... that’s right. No doubt about it.”

His body lost to the washed-out feeling coming over him, and still on his back, he extended his hand to the machinery. He opened up the handle he’d constructed before, and pricked his finger against a spot in the human molding right around the neck area.

“Wow, amazing. As I thought, the extended sleep drugs... really... work...”

Tired out over thinking through his incomprehensible situation, without finishing his sentence to its end, he fell unconscious.

He felt sick.

Along with a strong light-headedness, he woke up the stress accompanying it.

“My body is... aaah, guh!!”

He tried to stand as he was, but the pain he felt on his joints made his

movements into a crude imitation of a hornworm, so he decided to stop.

“Seriously, how long was I out this time...”

Enduring the pain, Tarou reached out towards the freezing apparatus. From the open valve, the nutrient injection was still flowing out. The analog gauge that indicated how much it still contained let him surmise he had been sleeping a full two days.

“Oh, I really shouldn’t fiddle around with these things too much. If I took a bit more medicine, I may have starved in my sleep... can’t laugh about that one.”

Rubbing off the ‘sleep’ that had hardened around his eyes, he tried putting the flowing nutrients to his mouth again. The sheer raw taste caused him to spit it up two or three times, but by that time, the inside of his mouth had been largely numbed. He somehow managed to flow it into his stomach, before lying down for a while, to rest his body.

“Hah... they’re not coming, are they. It’s a place we can’t get through unless we’re in cold sleep after all. ‘Course it’s going to take a long time.”

He had a slight bit of hope, but as that faded away, Tarou’s mouth turned sour. Reaching out a finger, he began to use the nutrient fluid to write letters on the ground.

“Oh god, at least rid me of my virginity before I come into your embrace. Ichijou Tarou’s final words... ah, maybe I should make it all seasonal poem like. Huh, was there something like that? No, I’m sure there’s a season of virgins. Got to be spring.”

He continued his murmuring to stave off the loneliness.

“Well not that it matters. Even if I die here, it’s not like anyone’s going to read... read?”

He looked at the nutrient fluid lettering with a hollow expression, but there, his movements came to a sudden stop.

“The hell? Eh? Huh? I’m writing in Japanese, aren’t I? Huh?”

He had been writing it without the slightest inhibitions, yet he found he couldn’t even read his own handwriting. It wasn’t a physical issue such as the

ground being too dirty, he couldn't understand the meaning of any of the lettering.

"Oh Jesus... has it finally started to infect my mind?"

Under immense stress, he' heard that certain somethings wouldn't remain in one's memories. Rather than experiencing it, he concluded he was too weakened, and he held his hurting body to stand. Because even when he wasn't doing anything, he felt he was drifting further and further away.

"So let's just put in a bit more effort. There're people who've found help driftin' lost through the Pacific Ocean. Space is more 'r less the same. Yeah. That's right."

Tarou found a bit of hope in his words, and beside the device he was probably in at one point... he stood before a device that still had its skeletal resident in place. He put his hands together, and prayed a bit, before stripping off some usable parts.

"So who cares if it's a seven sided hole. Just jam something into it well enough, and it'll turn."

He took out a few of the frame pieced big enough to fit in his hands, to see if there was anything rightly sized to fit into the screw of the duct. Determining a slightly largish L bracket looked usable enough, he used the other heavy looking metal parts in place of a hammer to shape it up.

"God dammit. What firmness... what's it made of? It isn't Iron? Titanium? What?"

No matter how hard he tried to hammer it, he couldn't give it the slightest of scratched. Abandoning the thought of using spare parts to undo the screws, he began to extract some relatively long parts.

"Even if I don't have the right tools, it's been made to be taken apart. I thought over what breakin' it would cost, but... I'll have to amend that. My life's on the line, so let's get right to it."

After skillfully disassembling the device, Tarou climbed up to the duct again, and the time, he began shoving parts into the holes of the mesh. Failing a number of times, he managed to fix an L piece to the grate, and he wound a wire

around the other side of it.

“Tereretetereee~. The Anmitt Company’s specially made Strength Fiber~. The amount carbon fiber can pull is twenty times that of steel. If you think you can snap it, just you try.”

This time, Tarou wrapped the other side of the wire around the cold sleep device he had been using. After confirming it was firmly fastened, he pulled a red lever in the back of the device without hesitation. A small tremor immediately fell upon the room, and the machine slowly began its descent back into the floor.

“It’s all yours. Use those hydraulics or something or whatever you’ve got. Onwards! Full throttle!!”

He put his hands together in prayer.
The descending device soon went through the excess, and began putting tension on the wire...

“Sachertorte!!?”

Something rapidly passed in front of his eyes.
Whatever it was, it tore off a good chunk of Tarou’s bangs, before it bounced off the ground with a sharp clatter, and disappeared off somewhere. Following that, an immense destructive sound rang out as the duct’s mesh dropped.

“... T-that was dangerous... I’ve got to be more careful next time. That was no different from a speeding bullet. Really hope there isn’t a next time, though.”

As Tarou looked at the lethal screw that had lost its momentum as it rolled along the ground, he rubbed his chest in relief, as he breathed out a sigh. After waiting for the beating of his heart to settle down, he pulled up the raise lever in the device with a slender wire he’d wrapped around beforehand.

“Oh it’s a bit of a mini elevator... up we go. Now then, now then, where does this connect, I wonder.”

Tarou rose up with the rising device. Approaching the dark hole above him, he held onto his anxiety and hopes as he breathed out his biggest sigh yet.

Chapter 3

(TL: I also translated two short stories you can find on the misc tab.

[The Probability I can Kill my Wife Without Being Found Out](#), [A Game to Make Him Fall](#))

“Uwooah, can’t see a thin’... turn back ‘f it looks like I’ll get lost.”

Tarou had cast his body into a narrow pipe likely meant as an air duct. He groped around to feel ahead, as he carefully crawled his legs forward.

“I ain’t frickin’ scared, dammit... but even ‘f I go down ‘ere, ‘f the exit’s the same as the entrance, then how ‘m I supposed to get out? Can’t force through from up ‘ere.”

In complete darkness, Tarou clumsily crept forward. Even he didn’t know why he was doing such a thing, but for now, he could only rely on the mysterious info in his head.

“Is this that sleep-learnin’ thing? Think ‘f et like that, and I can’t say it’s impossible, but that’s a bit much... ‘s the future after all, so ‘s possible that field’s become somethin’ amazin’.”

For the uncanny information in his mind, he thought up a setting where he could accept it, for now. It was evident that it would be useless, no matter how much he thought over it here, and for now, he had determined it would be fine to write it off like that.

“Ah, that was close. Branches down. ‘f I fell, I coulda died there. Gotta be careful.”

Rather than a fork leading downwards, it was more of a hole. Stroking the goosebumps on his arm that had missed its footing, he continued ahead. Some fleeting glances behind showed the light flowing in the room he had been in before growing further and further away.

“... Hmm, tinnitus? Nah, that’s not it. What’s this sound?”

The constant sound of wind flowing through the duct. A sound with a clearly different nature could be picked up through his strained ears. After looking back one more, he resolved himself, and started off in the direction of the sound. Meaning, he moved his legs deeper into the depths.

“Ah, it’s dark. It’s narrow. It’s scary. Damn, what am I even doing.”

Tarou endured the unease boiling up, continuing on. At present, he couldn’t tell how much distance he’d gained, but the feeling the sound wasn’t as distant as it had been was certain. Perhaps a baby’s crawl would have outpaced him.

“Huh? A dead end... or not. There’s a right... and a left... oh my? Oh my oh my oh my?”

Touching the wall, he felt a path in both directions. He did hesitate a moment on which was to turn, but the faint light reflected on his eyes eliminated his choice of options.

“I’m beggin’ ya. AC control room, or the nutrient supply storage would be nice too. If possible, somewhere you can send an SOS... doubt I’d know how ta use it, so maybe not.”

Letting his heart be deceived by his seething expectations, Tarou swiftly moved his aching knees. The source of the light was a room from below, and the fact there wasn’t a lid made him clench his fist in triumph.

“Kinda hoping here. ‘f it’s like this, I can get back without a rope... sorry, comin’ right in~.”

As he had already long since defined himself as cold and alone, he didn’t hesitate to let his body land on some sort of device below. Unravelling his legs, that had become stiffened in an unnatural position, he stood, and turned his eyes to the large machine right before his eyes.

“Whooooa... don’t really get it, but amazin’. What’s this? Wha’s it suppose to be?”

Tarou continued looking up at it as he approached the mass of machinery. The height was likely somewhere around twenty meters. At its center, a spherical metal, with irregular cables extending from it. Those wires connected to a number of rectangular devices. They were all fastened to a pillar that spanned

past the floor and ceiling, and at times, the lamps attached to the apparatus faces would flicker. In Tarou's memory, the closest shape that came to mind was the core of a nuclear reactor, but of course, the probability this was something like that was exceedingly low, and besides the fact that it was some sort of device, Tarou wasn't able to understand anything from it. All that was apparent to him was that the monitor fastened to the front was likely the operating terminal.

"That one's gotta be beyond me... way to far from my level 'f understandin'."

Without the slightest consideration, he rejected the idea of trying to manipulate the large mechanism, and turned over to the smaller device he had landed on to enter the room.

"Yea~h, too naïve was I. Was expectin' something from that sleep learnin', but guess it ain't so convenient.... Huh, oh look, a button."

Standing in front of the smaller device, he looked at the correspondent monitor directly to its side. There, he discovered a big red button sticking out of it. As he had assumed from the cold sleep chamber that he wouldn't find anything analogue, trifling as it was, he received a light shock.

"Push it, and that large machine over there ain't gonna explode, right... don't think they make systems that go to hell at the push of a single button these days. Ah, I'm not shakin' you know? I'm not shakin'."

It was important, so he said it twice, as he pressed his shaking finger against the button. A somewhat archaic 'PiPo' accompanied the lighting of the screen, as a green line of letters was displayed on the screen.

(TL: PiPo is the startup sound of the PC-9801

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeQvDMP48Ak>. First sound in this clip)

"So these sorts of things never change. Not the daftest idea what it says, but... aaaAAh!!"

His surprise made him let out a voice great enough to surprise even himself. Of the countless options listed on the screen. He found the 'Japanese' option.

"W-what should I do? Where's the... mouse... no I can do without. At the very

least a keyboard or something... damn, which is it? How do I control it?"

In his impatience, Tarou began groping around the screen. After pounding strongly against his chest to calm himself down, he carefully observed the small device.

"... Dammit!! There ain't anythin'! Just what the hell is this? Sound recognition? Ah, no. It's possible it's controlled directly through brainwaves... I do believe they experimented on that in the 21st century."

Clicking his tongue at the fact he couldn't find any UI, he found himself pushing his thoughts forward with the notion of, 'no way in bleedin' hell I'm gonna give up here'. And suddenly recalling something, he extended a hand in doubt.

"... It's a touchscreen. Am I an idiot?"

Thinking back on his prior panic, Tarou's face turned a little red. After deleting that scene from his mind, and clicking empty recycle bin, he scrolled through the complicated commands, and gazed fixatedly at the array of unknown languages.

"... Whazatt!!?"

Without any forewarning, a part of the device opened like a door, and Tarou raised a scream at the sphere that rolled out.

"No, as expected, I wasn't expectin' that one. What's this? Totes terrifying."

He took a few steps back from the mass. But that lump of metal rolled as if to follow him, and continued its approach. Tarou ran, the sphere closed the distance.

"OK, got it. For now, let's calm down, baby. Some important guy said you can understand most things if you talk them out. Then his wife found out about his cheating, and he was stabbed. HAHAHA!!"

Driven against the wall, Tarou continued letting out words from an indescribably fear. But caring not of his plight, the sphere approached him, a red light on it flickering.

"TH•EQUICK•BRO•WNFOX•JUMPED"

The sphere suddenly let out a voice. To what sounded like it belonged to a

woman, Tarou quickly shrunk his body, before raising his face as if to see if it was safe.

“Over the lazy dog... wait, the hell?”

Silence fell. Tarou thought over whether it was some sort of code, lamenting his careless remark at the end.

“THIS ▪ WAY THIS ▪ WAY”

Against his expectations, the sphere let out some awkward Japanese before rolling its way to the giant machine. Taken aback as he was, Tarou timidly started off in that direction. On top of a lack of the slightest understanding of his situation, he felt considerable dread, but from the joy that came from something finally reacting to an action he had taken, he was enveloped in a strange sense of delight.

“Yes, yes, I’ll be there right away, my little Koume-chan. Your big brother’s a little scared, so he doesn’t really want to go that way, though.”

He had given the mechanical sphere such a name, as it reminded him of the pith of a dried plum. He stopped his feet a little bit away from where the sphere had stopped rolling.

“Um, is there somethin’ there? I can’t see a thing... wait, you’re stuck on a cable! Though you look quite high tech, you’re a bit off, aren’t ‘ya!”

Tarou stuck in a self-retort as he reached a hand to the sphere in a life-or-death struggle to get over a cable. Surprised it was lighter than he thought, he ferried it to the other side.

“Thank You, sir.”

“Why English!? What’s more, that sounded ridiculously fluent!?”

(TL: As you may surmise, the line was in English.)

When her words were so broken if it came to Japanese, Tarou felt a strange disconsolation.

“Is it remote controlled? You’re watchin’ from somewhere, ain’t you? A moniter ‘r somethin’... where!! ... Yeah, no, thought not. Wait, is this for reals?”

Agilely turning in circles by himself, and showing off suspicious behavior, Tarou

headed for the sphere's destination, and stopped in his tracks.

"That's a Type V all right. What's more, it's been negatively modified... what's that? It's rigged backwards. Is it supposed to suck nutrients from me, and send it into that huge-ass machine over there?"

What was there was a machine of the same shape as the ones cold sleep ones in the previous room, and a device with a human-shaped intent within. Tarou swiftly understood its construction from the strange knowledge in his head, but from that knowledge, he confirmed several things that definitely weren't supposed to be there. The most blatant ones among them was a cable connecting it to a large nuclear-reactor-like apparatus.

"I don't want to be sittin' in that... but by this development, I'm definitely gonna end up in it, aren't I... let's be blunt here. The cold sleep success rate of this ship is way too low, man? Even if it's gotten a new version, personally, I don't think it's supposed to change so suddenly, you know."

In regards to the failed cold sleep pods, he knew it was likely due to some sort of accident. In the first place, there's no way a device with such a low success rate would ever be put to practical use, and the knowledge in his head supported that. But ignoring the reason, and strapping into the device wasn't such a simple thing to accept.

"Ge • tin ge • tin."

That sphere rotating round and round on the spot to urge him on.

"Even if 'ya tell me to get into that... ah, whatever. Got it, 'right. It's that. If somethin' happens to me, Koume, you're gonna be takin' responsibility."

Tarou decided to bet on the humanity of the future people he'd yet to lay eyes on, and slowly sunk his body into the human-shaped cavity. A device created with the pretense of human use could have been made too dangerous to the pilot, or so he told himself.

"Yes, this good enough for 'ya? Wah, aAAah!! It pricked me, yay, her it comes!!"

The pain he felt in his neck twisted his body. Tarou knew its identity was the medication that induced him to sleep, so he decided to quietly close his eyes.

While he truly fell into a deep sleep, the whole process only took a mere two minutes.

“... Yes, good morning. I’m Ichijou Teirow.”

Opening his eyes with a fuzzy hear, Tarou retorted towards who the hell Teiro was. Remembering his pre-sleep memories in the shaped silicon device gently enveloping his body, He slowly rose his body.

“Good morning, master Teirow. I have made use of override (data overwrite). How does your body feel.”

On that unexpected stranger’s voice, he hurriedly turned its eyes towards its origin point. There was the sphere he had personally named Koume.

“Not... bad. But... eh? Huh? What’s this mean? What did I...”

What the sphere. And what he put to mouth were both languages he had never heard in his life.

And by it, there was something he feared.

That he had fully come to understand it.

Chapter 4

“... Okay!”

Ichijou Tarou raised a single motivated yell, and removed his sluggish body from the device.

“There are way too many things I want to ask, but is it alright ‘f I interrogate ya a bit?”

He lowered his hips down by the sphere, with its lamp flickering onto the ground, and held his knees. Taking a sidelong glance into it, he continued.

“So what might you be? A guide? Do you do somethin’ in place of humans?”

The sphere slowly spun on the spot, making one doubt if any one side was its front. It flashed its lamp towards Tarou, and let out a voice.

“In regards to both questions, I must refute, Mister Teirow. Koume is not a guide, had it hasn’t been designed to do any specific job in the place of human labor. Or rather, from this appearance, it should be apparent such a thing would be impossible, dunce.”

“Okay, at the end, I think I heard somethin’ unpleasant, but le’s just put that aside. So are you that perfect AI thingamajig? The next gen majimon? And you’ve already set your name as Koume?”

Tarou’s memory. Or at least in his memory of the twenty first century were at a level where even the hint of a perfected AI had yet to be grasped. If the machine naturally responding to him at that very moment was something based in artificial intelligence, it was something he would be surprised about.

“What you refer to as a perfect AI has not been defined by the current race of humanity. But at the very least, Koume behaves based on a program, and operates on a quantum brain powered by a carbon battery. The name is set by the owner, Mister Teirow. It has been recorded as something you set.”

The orb shakily rolled left and right with its lamp flickering in accordance with its voice. Tarou raised a groan of, ‘Yeeaaaah’, as he questioned further.

“Well, it’s just an inkling, but I kinda get it, so let’s put that aside. You said your owner was me, but what would that mean? Personally, I’m delighted, but you won’t try to wring a large sum out of me later? Like claiming paying the store fee and your fee are separate things? I’ve a bit of a trauma there.”

“Affirmative. Deny both allegations, per... Mister Teirow. By the DNA print possessed of current owner, it corresponds with you 100%. Milky way imperial law, paragraph 228, subsection 83, by in the case of emergency evacuation, all rights of ownership to this vessel have been transferred to you. Data on old cabaret customs have not been recorded in the databank. It is your own fault for being deceived on the cost, per... pervert.”

“No, when you tried so hard, at least rephrase it!”

“Understood, Mister H. Teirow. Do you have any other questions?”

“That H was definitely the H of hentai, wasn’t it? Let’s see... well, whatever. Right. This ship. It’s been stopped for a while, right? Accident?”

“Affirmative, Mister Teirow. The sections from the fuel to the engines have been detached. The cause has not been recorded.”

“Whee, for real... if there’s no engine, that ain’t even a ship anymore. We’re just floatin’ in space.”

“Affirmative, Mister Teirow. You are in a bit of an oversized coffin. Ha. Ha. Ha.”

“Exactly, hahaha!! To hell with that!!”

Bending his wrist, Tarou poked the sphere. It rolled with him.

“Violence does not bring about anything, Mister Teirow. Well, the acquaintance that said that was found out for his cheating, and stabbed. HAHAAHA.”

“No, I just used that joke... even so, my situation hasn’t changed for the better, huh. Not being able to move kills the man... Ah, right. Do you know what year A.D. it is? And around how far we are from earth.”

“Deepest apologies, Mister Tierow. In relation to year, the term A.D. does not align with the databanks. In regards to the planet known as earth, it has been recorded as a planet of ancient folklore. But no one has ever confirmed its

existence.”

“Folklore!? Oy, oy, how far in the future is this...”

On that unexpected response, Tarou stretched himself out across the ground. He had been certain it was quite a distance future, but he hadn't even imagined the Earth's very existence would be in doubt.

“Now that's a doozy... ah, and didn't you just say Milky way empire, or somethin' like that? Is there any planet that humans live nearby? I don't quite get what ownership lets me do either.”

“Yes, Mister Teirow. There exists a terraformed planet 20000 light years from this point. In reference to the transfer of ownership, it is emergency evacuation regulation. Meaning, the case where the previous owner has been lost, and the rest of the crew remain on the spacecraft, the ship can set free. If a nationality registry or company name is left on it, its ownership will return to its original affiliation once in port, but this ship's ownership has not been recorded. In name and in essence, this ship is your personal belonging.”

“Oh I see,” he crossed his arms. He didn't get it down to its finest details, but he understood plenty, that this giant piece of oversized garbage seemed to rightfully belong to him. And understanding anything else was unnecessary.

“Hah... even so, twenty thousand lightyears, eh? Sounds like they'd have a warp. But if there's no engine, that isn't happening... and wait a minute there. Havin' come so far, why was I woken up? So I get to learn all this stuff before I die? A bothersome act of kindness?”

“Affirmative. Refuting point, Mister Teirow. An overdrive by compressing stored oxygen is possible. In regards to fuel, it is surmised to be possible to use items in the residential area. At present, the reason the cold sleep device reactivated is surmised to be because it calculated a final possibility that you could be saved. It was definitely not harassment. Probably.”

“Mhm, mhm. It bothers me why you tacked on that last part, but I'll even leave that aside. Anyways, what's this possibility of me being saved?”

“Yes, from the ship's present relative velocity, it should be approaching a stargate in the immediate vicinity. The distance to a space station along with the

distance gained by using an overdrive through turning the residential district to fuel are nearly identical.”

“A space station!! I see, come to think of it, that’s right. It’s not like humans can only live on planets... wait, wait right a second. Something’s caught me, that. If we’ll just barely make it in the maximum distance we can warp, then if we miss it, that’s the end?”

“Affirmative, Mister Teirow. The next change will come in 17,000 years time. The operational limit for a cold sleep device is 500 years, so the rest goes without saying.”

“Goes without saying? Quite a way to put it. But I see... um, Koume. Since it wen’ outta the way to wake me up, that would mean ya can’t move this ship yourself, right?”

“Affirmative again, Mister Teirow. As even you can see in your human shortsightedness, Koume is only able to roll around. What sort of things are you expecting from a simple ball?”

“Yeah, yeah. Sorry for that. Then what are we supposed to do, ya’ bastard?”

“I’m sure there is only one option remaining, Mister Teirow. You do it.”

“Me?”

The approximately ten-centimeter diameter sphere rolling along the ground. Tarou stared dumbfound at its vivid green a red flashing lights, and his expression persisted in one of failed understanding.

“Hey, I’m a twenty first century antique here. A human of a time where when it came to spaceships, we’d gone to the moon and back at most. So what are you saying I can do?”

“Mister Teirow. I do not know this moon you refer to, but that is correct. You do it.

With those words, Koume rolled across a hard iron plate. She came to a gentle stop in front of the modified cold-sleep device Tarou had been stationed in before.

“By the way, Mister Teirow. You have gotten quite fluent at galactic standard

language.”

“Galactic standard... r-right. What’s with this. Why can I speak these words I’ve never learned? Does it have to do with the whack knowledge in my head?”

“Uncertain, Mister Teirow. Only you could understand what strange things go on in your head. But I do know about the language.”

Koume repeated a flash of green, as she tapped against the cold-sleep device.

“Override. Mister Teirow.”

“Override?”

“That is right. Override. This device before your eyes has written over your memories. Who made it, and when it was made, and why it is here, that is unknown. But how to use this device is recorded in the databank.”

“Overwriting... memory?”

Tarou let his body shake along with the chill running up his spine.

“W-wait a second. The inside of my head’s been messed with? Somethin’ like that’s... h-huh? Japanese... Japanese ain’t coming out. Wait, calm down. Nonono, I should be able to speak it. How many decades has’t been...”

“Mister Teirow. Your language cortex has been overridden. Please calm down. You shouldn’t be feeling any discomfort.”

“As if I could calm down!!”

As Tarou gave an agitated cry, he grabbed Koume with his right hand, and lifted her up to face level.

“Mister Teirow. I apologize for arbitrarily writing over your language. But it is a fact there was no other way. No precise database of Japanese has been left behind.”

Still holding Koume up, Tarou gritted his teeth with rough breath. After a single deep breath, he let his shaking hands slowly lower her to the ground. Even for the sake of a momentary diversion, throwing Koume against the wall wouldn’t accomplish anything, and Tarou understood that well enough.

“Well... right... sorry.”

He dug his face between his knees, and took another deep breath. Koume was bobbing back and forth beside him but his thoughts were unclear. Without letting out a single word, he calmed himself down.

After an extent of time had passed. Tarou lifted his face, and turned his eyes to the still-bobbing globe-shaped AI.

“So what do I have to become? A pilot? Or an engineer?”

Saying that, he slowly stood, and strapped himself into the cold-sleep device.

“Mister Teirow. I am thankful for your resolution. But it is neither pilot nor engineer. While both roles are, of course, effective ones, Koume has the minimum required knowledge to fulfill them. Those are jobs where an individual’s nature and disposition do not bring about a transfiguration. The specialized professions divided into pilot and engineer are not required at present, and whether you could become one is a separate issue.”

Koume flickered her lamps, as she moved in front of him.

“Mister Teirow. Are you aware of the structure for a computer to operate?”

Tarou closed his eyes a little, and gave a small, ‘I see’.

“The programming, eh?. It’s true without that, nothing would start... but don’t you need knowledge on what you’d be programming? Like how you couldn’t make accounting software if you didn’t know accounting.”

“Affirmative, Mister Teirow. I think it is wonderful for you to be so quick on the uptake. But...”

As if she were human, Koume took a deep breath.

“You already possess that knowledge, Mister Teirow. Just who might you be?”